

Remarks

Applicants appreciate the thorough examination of the present application as evidenced by the Office Action dated August 26, 2003 and the Supplemental Office Action dated October 15, 2003. Both Office Actions set forth the status of the claims; however, only the Office Action dated August 26, 2003 sets forth the claim rejections with specificity. Therefore, the current Amendment references the Office Action dated August 26, 2003 (hereinafter "Office Action").

Claims 1-3, 11-26 and 34-48 are pending in this application. Claims 1-3 and 11-23 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 24, 34, 39-42, 47 and 48 stand rejected. Claims 25, 26, 35-38 and 43-46 are objected to in the Office Action.

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 25, 26, 35-38 and 43-46 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended claims 25 and 35-37 pursuant to the Examiner's suggestion in order to place the claims in condition for allowance. Applicants have canceled claims 26, 38, 47 and 48, without prejudice. Applicants have added new claims 49-51 that present the subject matter of original claims 35-37 as they now depend from amended claim 34. Thus, support for these amendments and new claims is found in the language of the original claims and currently pending claims, as well as throughout the specification. Consequently, no new matter is added by these amendments and new claims and their entry and allowance are respectfully requested. The concerns raised by the Examiner in the Office Action are addressed below.

I. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 24 and 47 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,415,946 to Friz (hereinafter "Friz"). Applicants have amended claim 24 to delete the recitations directed to lanthanum (La), actinium (Ac), and rutherfordium (Rf). Applicants have cancelled claim 47, thereby mooted the rejection of claim 47.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims of the present invention are not anticipated by Friz, and respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 34, 39-42 and 48 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Friz as applied to claim 24 and 47 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,407,435 to Ma et al. (hereinafter "Ma et al.") Applicants have amended 34 to delete the recitations directed to lanthanum (La), actinium (Ac), and rutherfordium (Rf). As noted above, Applicants have amended claim 24, and respectfully submit that claim 24 is patentable over the cited references. Consequently, claims 39-42, which are directly or indirectly dependent therefrom, are also patentable. Applicants have cancelled claim 48, thereby mooted the rejection of claim 48.

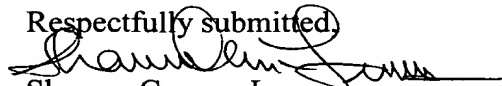
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims of the present invention are not unpatentable over Friz or further in view of Ma et al., and respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request that all outstanding rejections to the claims be withdrawn and that a Notice of Allowance be issued in due course. The Examiner is invited and encouraged to contact the undersigned directly if such contact will expedite the prosecution of the pending claims to issue. In any event, any questions that the Examiner may have should be directed to the undersigned, who may be reached at (919) 854-1400.

A check in the amount of \$506.00 is enclosed. This amount is believed to be correct. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0220.

Respectfully submitted,

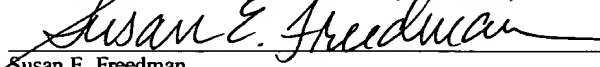

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Susan E. Freedman
Date of Signature: March 15, 2004